

### *Says Restoring Bridge Will Bring New Recreational & Economic Opportunities For Region*

*Highland, NY* - As part of his ongoing effort to restore the historic Poughkeepsie Railroad Bridge, Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today announced a new \$440,000 federal grant to transform the bridge into the Walkway Over the Hudson -- a new pedestrian bridge spanning the Hudson River. Hinchey said the new funds would be used with other sources of previously secured funding, including \$874,000 in federal funding that the congressman obtained in 2005, to pay for upgrades to the overpass. The funds for the bridge, which will play a central role in next year's quadricentennial celebration of Henry Hudson's exploration of the river that now bears his name, come from the National Park Service's Save America's Treasures grant program.

"These federal funds will help pay for important improvements to the Poughkeepsie Railroad Bridge that will ensure the structural integrity of the overpass," Hinchey said. "We are less than a year away from opening up the bridge to the public, which in turn will create a variety of recreational opportunities for residents and visitors and serve as a tourism attraction that will help provide a lift to our area's economy. Four hundred years after Henry Hudson explored the river below the bridge, we are opening up a new source of wonder and exploration for New York residents and visitors."

The Poughkeepsie Railroad Bridge rehabilitation project includes the stabilization of the walkway onto the bridge from the western shore of the Hudson River on the Ulster County side and construction of an observation deck. Upon completion, the project will yield a 1.25 mile trail spanning the Hudson River that will link over 30 miles of trail systems -- the Maybrook Corridor Trail in Dutchess County and the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail in Ulster County.

The bridge is slated to open to the public in the fall of 2009, which is the 400th anniversary of the historic exploration of the Hudson River by Henry Hudson. The Poughkeepsie Railroad Bridge is going to be one of the main focal points of next year's quadricentennial celebration of the historic voyages of Henry Hudson and Samuel de Champlain, as well as for the bicentennial celebration of

Robert Fulton's endeavor. The various events throughout New York commemorating and celebrating those historic anniversaries are intended to provide cultural and educational

experiences and serve as a tourism attraction.

The Poughkeepsie Railroad Bridge is 119 years old and stands 212 feet above the Hudson River. The new grant funding will address the repair of steel elements of the 19th Century structure, which until recently has received virtually no maintenance or repairs since a 1974 fire ended the spans use as a railroad bridge.

Hinchey secured \$874,000 in federal funds for the Poughkeepsie Railroad Bridge from Congress in 2005 as part of a major transportation projects bill. Those funds, which will be used for lighting elements across the walkway of the bridge, were the first major allocation of money for the Walkway Over the Hudson project and helped propel the rehabilitation initiative forward.

Hinchey is the author of the legislation that created the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area, the first federal action formally recognizing the fundamentally significant role the people of the Hudson Valley played in the early development of America and its institutions. The congressman has worked to secure a variety of sources of federal funding for the heritage area, including the \$440,000 released today for the Poughkeepsie Railroad Bridge.